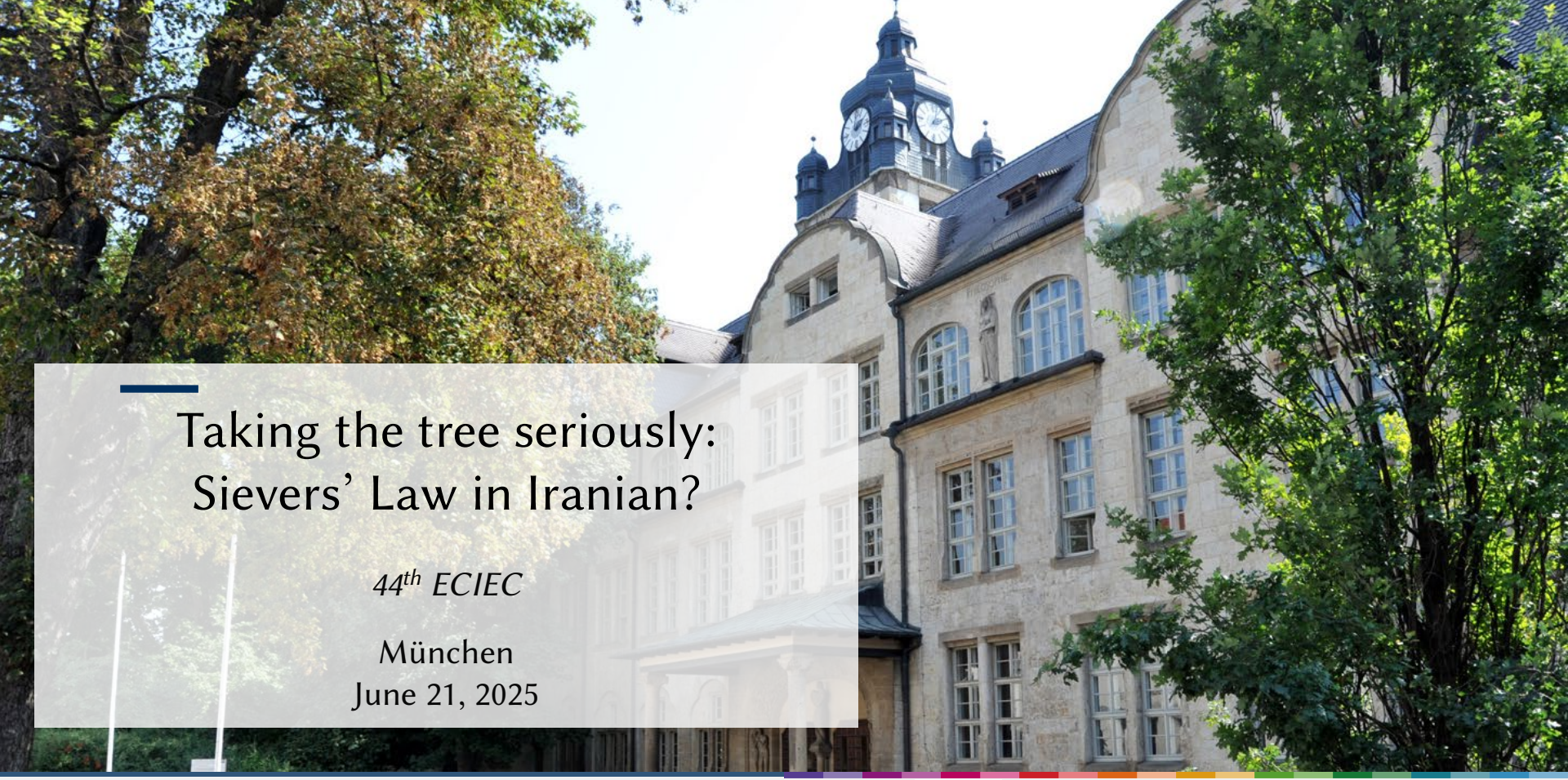

Taking the tree seriously: Sievers' Law in Iranian?

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0. Roadmap

1. Introduction
    1. A cladistic perspective
    2. Sievers' Law (SL) in IE and Vedic
2. SL in Iranian
    1. Evidence in Avestan
    2. Evidence in later stages
    3. A special case: *TRY
    4. Conclusion
3. Possible solutions
4. Final conclusions

1. Introduction

1. Taking the tree seriously:

A phylogenetic / cladistic perspective

First reconstruct all intermediary nodes before proceeding to PIE

Problem: no general agreement about most intermediary nodes higher than primary branches

Italo-Celtic? Balkan IE? Graeco-Aryan? Indo-Slavic?

More or less secure: Indo-Iranian, Balto-Slavic

⟹ Reconstruct first Proto-Indo-Iranian (PIIr.), then proceed to PIE

1. Introduction

2. Sievers' Law (SL) based on Sievers (1878) ..., cf. Byrd 2010; 2015

*j > *i; *w > *u /XC._V after virtually heavy syllables (X = VR, V:)
syllable boundary morphologically conditioned, hence for suffix-initial **j/w*

Not relevant for primarily syllabic **i*, distinct from **j*
= no converse of SL (as in Germanic)

E.g., "Locatival" Suffix **i-(j)o-* (Mayrhofer 1986: 161, 165f.) or < **-iHo-*
vs. simple **-jo-* and **-j-o-* (from *i*-stems)

Cf. **k*^{w}*tur-íjo-*, **diw-ijó-*, **ph*$_2$*tr-ijo-* vs. **méd*^{h}*-jo-*, **néw-jo-*, **sew-jó-*, **h*$_1$*sn̥t-jó-*
> Ved. *turī́ya-*, *div*$_i$*yá-*, *pítr*$_i$*ya-* vs. *mádhya-*, *návya-*, *savyá-*, *satyá-*

1.2 SL in Indo-Aryan (Early Vedic)

y > *i(y)* <y, iy>, *w* > *u(w)* <v, uv>

Ved. *dev-$_{i}$yā́s, pārś$_{u}$v-á-, pátn-$_{i}$yā, ā́r$_{i}$y-a-, rāj-$_{i}$yá-*; *mīḍh-$_{u}$vā́ṃs-, dāś-$_{u}$vā́ṃs-*

Originally not after obstruent clusters (Schindler 1977)

cf. *mats-ya-, -cákṣ-ya, tuch-yá-* (*vak-ṣyá-, yák-ṣva, yuk-ṣvā́, yuk-tvā́*)

would this have included PIE *VHT (> later V:t)?

Extended to (some) -CY° morphs in Vedic (Byrd 2010):

-bhyas ~ -bh$_{i}$yas, -dhvam ~ -dh$_{u}$vam, -tva- ~ -t$_{u}$va-

but always *-syá-/-ṣyá-, -tvā́*

Lost by late RV due to general *iy, uv* > *y, v* /C_V (except C = TR)

(but maybe not in all dialects of IA, cf. Pkt. *sūria-, āriya- ~ sujja-, ajja-*)

2. Evidence for SL in Iranian

Problem: Information about syllabicity obscured by
**y, *w* > OP <iy>, <uv>; Avestan (transmission) <ii>, <uu>

Syllable count in Avestan (Gathic) metrical texts

Early consonantal changes triggered by following **y/w*:

- Common Iranian fricativization **tC* > *θC* etc., cf. **satya-* > **haθya-*
- Dialectal Old Iranian **čy* > *śy* > YAv. *ś*, OP *šy*; cf. **čyawa-* > *śauua-*/*šiyava-*
  YAv. **ǰy* > **źy* > **ź* > *ž*, cf. **druǰya-* > *druža-*
- Old Persian **θy* > *šy*, cf. **haθya-* > *hašiya-*

[Not reliable: Av. post-fricative **w* > *β/b/p*; **hy* > *x́ii/ŋ́h*, **hw* > $x^{v}/ŋ^{v}h$]

2.1 Evidence for SL in Avestan

Sievers (1878): Wrong examples = all with old **-i(j)V-*

Schindler (1977: 58f.): 3 relics

- *məṇdāidiiāi* Y 53.6 {mandā-diyāi}
- *mərᵊṇgᵊduiiē* Y 44.8 {mərng-duwai}
- PN *huuō.guua-* 4x 3syll. {haugu.a-} < **hau=gw-a-* from **hugu-*

Beekes (1988: 99f.): "most suffixes have a fixed form"
frequent /-ia-/ might be /-iʔa-/, hence only 2 examples:
/Haugua-/ < **hau-gv-a-*
fem. *vaŋhuiiā-* /vahv-iā-/ "must be due to" SL (but /būmyā-/!):
no, rather /wahu-yā-/ (already Schmidt 1889: 213 n.; metrically supported)

2.1 Evidence for SL in Avestan

1) *məṇdāidiiāi* Y 44.8 = 4 syllables, {məndādiyāi}? vv. ll. *māṇ°, °daid°*

Hardly probable against *mərəṇgəidiiāi* {mərng-dyāi} 46.11;
vōizdiiāi {waiz-dyāi} 43.13; *mərąždiiāi* {mərnž-dyāi} 44.14;
būždiiāi {būž-dyāi} 44.17; *sūidiiāi* {sū-dyāi} 44.2; 49.3; *sazdiiāi* {saz-dyāi} 30.2;
dazdiiāi {daz-dyāi} 44.1; *āždiiāi* {až-dyāi} 51.17

-ā- not really secure, cf. *māṇcā daidiiāi* Y 31.5, *daidiiāi* Y 51.20

Rather catalectic (or for **mənā. dăidiiāi,* Werba 1986: 335?)

2) *mərəṇgəduiiē* 53.6 {mərng-duwai}?
against *θβarᵒždūm* {θwarž-dwam} etc.

Probably rather irregular meter (Y 53 generally less regular)

2.1 Evidence for SL in Avestan

3) OAv. *huuō.guua-* (Y 46.16f.; 51.17f.) family name of *frasaōštra-, dəjāmāspa-*
trisyllabic < **hau=gu(w)a-* vs. YAv. *huuōuua-, huuōuuī-* < **=ɣw-a-/ī-*
< **hau=gw-a-* derived from *hugu-* (vgl. Ved. *sugú-*), cf. Vedic *náva-gva-* etc.

Unsure: rather **huwa=gw-a-*? (cf. Nyberg 1938; Hoffmann 1974)
metrically (cf. Kümmel 2018) ∪ ∩ better than — ∪ at all four places

<huuō> unexpected from **hau=*, cf. OAv. *haōząθβa-*; YAv. *haōmanaŋha-,*
haōsrauuah-, haōsrauuaŋha-, haōšiianŋha-

Only one dubious parallel: OAv. *huuō.ɣžaθa-* YH 38.3, if < **hau=gžaθa-*
but better < **hu=wagžaθa-* (Narten 1986: 219ff.; Hintze 2007: 236f.)

°uuō.C normally < *°*waC*: *drəguuō.d°* < **drugwad-*, *druuō.gaēθā* < **druwa=g°* ...

2.1 Evidence for/against SL in Avestan

Comparatives

Weak evidence: <jii> (vs. *ž*), syllable count (?) in YAv.

YAv. *aōjiiehīš* Yt 13; *nazdiiō* Yt 17.21; *rəṇjiiō* Y 10.19; ⁺*drājiiō* P
but cf. also *yūjiia-* < **yuǰya-*

Counterexamples stronger:

OAv. ᵘ*ruuāⁱdiiå* {rwādyāh} 34.6
nāⁱdiiåŋhəm {nādyāhəm} 34,8
rāⁱniiō.skərᵊⁱtīm {rānyaskərtīm} 44.6; 47.3; 50.2

YAv. *tąśiiå, tąśiiehī-* 'stronger' < **tanč-yah-* (cf. *taṇcišta-*)

2.1 Evidence against SL in Avestan

No disyllabic variants of endings **-byā, *-byah, *-dwai, *-dwam*

OAv. always *-biiā, -biiō, -dūm* = {-byā, -byah; -dwam}

-ōibiiō, -ōibiiā, -ō.dᵇbiiō

*θβarᵒ̄žd**ū**m* {θwarž-dwam}; *sāzdūm* {sāz-dwam}; *-uuōizdūm* {waiz-dwam};

θrāzdūm {θrāz-dwam}; *dazdūm* {daz-dwam}

[Yav. *-δβe, -δβəm* < **-dwai*, **-dwam*]

Gerundive only *-θβa-* < **-twa-* (vs. Vedic *-tva-* ~ *-t$_u$va-*)

jąθβa-, mąθβa-, scąθβa-, vąθβa-/vąθβā-, dąstuua- {dans-twa-}

pōiθβa-, vōiθβa-, staōθβa-, xšnaōθβa-; *yašᵇθβa-, vaxᵊθβa-*

But -TY° not relevant for Byrd's version of SL

2.1 Evidence against SL in Avestan

Perfect participle only {-wāh-}:

OAv. *nąsuuå* {nans-wāh}; YAv. *yōiθβāh-* < **yayt-wāh-*, *-vaōxᵛāh-* < **wawk-wāh-*

Possessive only {-want-}: disyllabic *astuua(ṇ)t-* {astwa(n)t-}, *āfəṇt-* < **āp-want-*

Feminine participle *-ąiθiiā-* < **-anθ-yā-* ~ *-aiṇtiiā-* < **-ant-iyā-*

dauuąiθiiå patąiθiiå, bauuąiθiiāica būšiiąiθiiāica, druuąiθiiāṯ, rąxšiiąiθiiå

vs. *vanaiṇtiiåsca, hunuuaiṇtiiå* (cf. *°aiθiiā-* ~ *°aitiiā-*)

Further cases with *y*

mərąśiiāṯ {mərnś-yāt} Y 45.1 < **mərnč-yā-t*

aōjiiaēšū {auǰyaišu} Y 46.12: alleged meaning ‘to be praised’ insecure patronymic **auǰy-a-*? (Kellens/Pirart)

2.1 Evidence against SL in Avestan

Further cases with *y*

sar$^{ə^i}$diiaiiå {sard-(i?)yayāh} Y 33.9 ‘companions/rivals’ (?) < **sard-ya-*

ąiθiiå Yt 10.28 < **anθyā-* ‘doorpost’ < **ant-yā-* (cf. Ved. *ātā-*)

pascąiθiia- ‘northern’ < **pasčānθya-* < **pasčā=ant-ya-* (?)

būmiiå {būm-yāh} Y 32.3

uzūiθiiōi {uz=ūθyai} Y 46.5

āfiia- ‘reach’ < **āf-ya-* = Khot. *eh-*, Oss. *af-*

**apāčya-* > **apāś(y)a-* > YAv. *apaśa*, Bactrian *abaš* ‘back’, Sogd. *pāš* ‘north’

**frāčya-* > **frāś(y)a-* > YAv. *fraśa* ‘forth’, Sogd. *frāš* ‘south’

2.1 Evidence against SL in Avestan

Further cases with *w*

ārᵊzuuā {ārzwā} ‘rightness’ Y 33.1 < **ārzw-a-* ⟵ **ərz-u-*

PN *bāṇduua-* {bandwa-} Y 49.1f.

rōiθβa-/raēθβa- ‘mix’ < **raiθwa-* < **rait-wa-*

haōząθβa- < **hau=zanθw-a-* ⟵ **hu=zan-tu-*

vazduuarᵊ {wazd-war} Y 31.21

yāθβ- ‘sorcerer’ < **yā-tw-* ~ *yā-tu-*

[*dāhuuā* {dā-hwa} Y 50.2; *varᵊšuuā* {war-šwa} Y 53.3
kamnafšuua- {kamna=fšwā} 46.2]

2.1 Evidence against SL in Avestan

Disyllabic {i.V}, {u.V} always original

Suffix *-i.(j)o-: {wāstr-i.a-, parw-i.á-, márt-i.a-, napt-i.a-, staum-i.a- ...}
cf. {záw-i.a-, dwit-í.a- ...}

Laryngeal hiatus *i/uHV: {ərž=ǰiH-ai, uz-HiHər-dyāi, haxti-Hāh;
ahu-Hāh, hizuH-ā, tanuH-ah}
cf. {friH-a-, tuH-ám, búH-at, húH-ar, huH-ánh, zuH-áya-, mru(H).-Hai}

Word boundary (=*H?): {pari=(H)augža, pati=
wi=adarsam; hu=(H)apah-, hu=āθra-}

Morphological boundary: {sru.-ai, a-sru.-ātam}

2.2 Further evidence against SL in Iranian

Later stages: no detectable relics of inherited forms with SL

Counterexamples showing non-application at Old Iranian stage

**dauć-ya-* ‘milk’ > MP *dōš-*, Oss. D. *doc-*

**xrauc-ya-* ‘cry, shout’ (YAv. *xraōsiia-*) > **xraušya-* ⟹ NP *xurōš-*

**asmāka-* ⟶ **ahmāč-ya-* > **ahmāś(y)a-* ‘our’ > Wanetsi *moš*
beside **ahmāč-iya-ka-* > **amāǰyaka-* > Khot. *mājaa-*

**snāf-ya-* ‘bathe’ > Khot. *ysänāh-* (⟹ Toch. *sanapa-*, Dragoni 2023)

?**tūr-ya(ka)-* > Av. *tūiriia-* ‘curdled’, MP <tyl(k)> *tīr(ag)* ‘c., solid; turbid; dark’
cf. Av. *tūiri-*‘curdled (cheese)’; Greek *tūrós*

2.2 Further evidence against SL in Iranian

Counterexamples showing non-application at Old Iranian stage

**tarx-w-* (~ **tark-u-*) ‘turning’ > Pashto *trax* ‘armpit’ (Kreidl 2025: 237ff.)

**parcu-* ⟶ **pārcw-a-* ‘Persia, Persian’ > OP *pārsa-*

**parcu-* ⟶ **pārcw-a-* ‘side’ (= Ved. *pārś*$_u$*vá-*) > **pārswa-* > Oss. *fars*

sraku-*/sraxw-a-* ⟶ **srāxw-a-* ‘side’ > Pashto *rox*

?**swa=tāw-ya-* ‘ruler, lord’ > **hwatāwya-* > Bactrian χοαδηο, MP *x*^{w}*adāy*

[**swai-θya-* ‘own’ > MP *x*^{w}*ēš*, Oss. D. *xec-*

**swar-ti-* ~ **swar-θy-* ‘food’ > Oss. D. *xwælcæ*

**gā-θw-* (~ **gā-tu-*) ⟶ OP *gāθu-* ‘place; throne’, MP *gāh*(*ūg*)]

2.3 A special case: *TRy

Sequence TRY synchronically impossible

PIE and PIIr. solution: *TṚY

cf. Ved. *pitṛ́vya-, bhrātṛ́vya-, cakṛ́-vān, jaghan-vān, jagam-yāt*

but **ṛ́y* > *riy* in *cakri-yās* etc. (cf. *mri-yá-* = Av. *miriia-* < **mṛ́-ya-*)

Av. *tūiriia-, brātruiia-/brātūiria-, ātriia-* < **(p)tərwya-, *brātərwya-, *ātərya-*

But *TRiy, *TRuw in some cases ~ *TR(i/u)-:

Av. *jaɣmiiąm, baβriiąn*; OP *caxriyā* ‘would have done’;

Av. *jaɣnuuāh-*; gen. sg. *baršnuuō* < **barʒnuw-as*

generally **-nuw-V* ~ **-naw-*, **-nu-* (as in Vedic)

Analogical preservation of TR ⟹ only *i(y), u(w)* possible

2.4 Conclusion: SL in Iranian and Indo-Iranian?

No reliable evidence for former existence of SL in Iranian
(except analogical *iy*, *uw* after TR)
Fitting typological profile tolerating more complicated clusters, onsets and codas in Iranian, less preference for “optimal” syllables

Cf. Av. initial /fšt, fsr, fθr, str, xšw, db, tk, (p)t/
internal /fstr, rštr/; final /xš, fš, xšt, st, št, ršt, rt/
mostly inherited (hard to explain as innovations)

What to reconstruct for Proto-Indo-Iranian?

PIIr. otherwise typologically more similar to Iranian than to Sanskrit:
more clusters, no geminates

3. Possible solutions

Solution 1: SL was not PIIr. and hence not PIE,
situation preserved in Iranian (and elsewhere?)

SL = Indo-Aryan innovation (parallel in Germanic)

Fits general IA tendency to optimize syllables incl. onsets
vs. different tendencies in much of Iranian (cf. Kümmel 2014)

Rules for CjV/CiV not very stable diachronically

Cf. Latin *CjV > CiV (> Romance *CjV): **meðjos* > *me.di.us* > **mɛdjʊ*

Old Persian *CyV > CiyV (against MP)

Germanic *CijV > Gothic CjV, West Germanic *(C)CjV

3. Possible solutions

Solution 2: SL was PIE and PIIr. (more restricted than in Indic/Germanic)

= Loss of variation in Iranian (and other branches)
but with preservation of original/primary *-*i.V*-, how?

a) Syncope in SL-based *-*i(y)V* vs. primary *-*iXa*-
would presuppose long preservation of **X* = **H*?

Or some equivalent distinction like **i.yV* vs. **i.∅V* [i?V]?

b) Generalization of shorter variant in SL-cases

How could contrast of nominal *-*ya*- vs. *-*iya*- be preserved?
Functionally different enough? Some confusion expected

4. Final conclusions and outlook

No evidence for Sievers' Law in Iranian + preserved contrast $^{*}CyV : {}^{*}CiyV$
$\Longrightarrow$ Conflict with Indic

State at higher node = Proto-Indo-Iranian:

1) Either = Iranian, no SL
SL parallel innovation in Indic, Germanic, and ?

2) Or = Indic, loss of SL in Iranian
only possible if SL-triggered $^{*}i(y)V$ different from primary $^{*}i(X)V$
then what was $^{*}X$?

Only if 2, SL might be PIE (depending on the other nodes)

<ʾcʾtyh> *āzādīh* < **āzātiyaθwam*

Thank you for your attention!

Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit!